United Nations E/2011/101

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2011

Original: English

Substantive session of 2011
Geneva, 4-29 July 2011
Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Coordination, programme and other questions: international cooperation in the field of informatics

International cooperation in the field of informatics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/38, in which the President of the Council was requested to convene the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for one more year to enable it to continue its efforts to act as a bridge with regard to information technology between the evolving needs of Member States and the actions of the Secretariat.

The report highlights the continuing cooperation of the Working Group and the Secretariat, which has resulted in practical enhancements in the area of information and communications technology that facilitate the work of Member States and observers of the United Nations, as well as that of the non-governmental organizations accredited to the United Nations.

* See E/2011/100.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2010/38, the Economic and Social Council requested its President to convene the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for one more year to enable it to carry out, from within existing resources, the due fulfilment of the provisions of its resolutions on international cooperation in the field of informatics, to facilitate the successful implementation of the initiatives being taken by the Secretary-General with regard to the use of information technology and to continue the implementation of measures required to achieve its objectives.

2. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 2010/38 the Economic and Social Council requested the Working Group to continue its efforts to act as a bridge between the evolving needs of Member States and the actions of the Secretariat. The Working Group has continued to collaborate closely with the Secretariat to direct its existing resources in practical ways that best meet the needs of Member States, observers and non-governmental organizations with regard to the everyday use of information and communications technology (ICT) in accomplishing the work of the diplomatic community associated with the United Nations. The Working Group will continue to examine and discuss its role, status and mandate in 2011, and will reflect any resulting findings in its next report.

3. The Office of Information and Communications Technology, established in January 2009, is responsible for the development and implementation of the Secretariat-wide ICT strategy, in close cooperation with ICT governance groups, including the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics.

II. Cooperation between the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and the Secretariat

4. During the period 2010-2011, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and the Secretariat have maintained effective cooperation. The Office of Information and Communications Technology has facilitated the meetings of the Working Group and provided regular updates on the implementation of ICT strategic programmes of the Secretariat.

5. The Secretariat and the Working Group continue to expand their efforts with regard to website tools and maintain a shared responsibility for the creation and maintenance of web pages and document updates.

6. With the guidance of the Working Group, the Secretariat has continued to expand its efforts to more fully utilize collaboration tools to meet the needs of the General Assembly Committees. For example, CandiWeb has been successfully utilized to support election processes for United Nations organs.

7. The deleGATE website (www.un.int), developed through a joint effort by the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Department of Public Information, provides content in English and French from the Secretariat's Intranet site iSeek, as well as links to other information created especially for delegates, and is accessed approximately 30,000 times per month on average. In coordination with the Office and the Department of Management, the Department of Public Information also looked into finding ways in which to share information with Member States about the status of their financial contributions.

III. ICT connectivity and access

8. The Office of Information and Communications Technology maintains Wi-Fi connectivity and dedicated Internet access points for delegates throughout the public areas and conference rooms of the New York campus. Plans to adjust Wi-Fi coverage will be made throughout activities related to the capital master plan in order to maintain continuity of connectivity during meetings, conferences and events, as well as to maintain access to resources and tools such as CandiWeb and the Member States portal.

IV. Information and communications technology services

9. The Office of Information and Communications Technology provides website hosting services and a standard web content management system for 62 permanent missions. These systems streamline procedures and provide an easy-to-use interface including permanent mission websites to update and maintain their content, while providing enhanced information security.

10. The Office continues to provide e-mail services to permanent missions by supporting approximately 1,200 e-mail accounts on four dedicated servers running the standard system (Lotus Notes) used at Headquarters. The e-mail system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is backed up daily. All e-mail messages are scanned for viruses, malicious software and unsolicited mail. The support of the Service Desk is available during normal office hours.

11. The Office of Information and Communications Technology continues to support the Internet Café for delegates (ICT Resource Centre), located on the second floor of the North Lawn Conference Building. The Internet Café has 18 personal computers, which have been configured with Internet access, Adobe Reader and Microsoft Office 2003 to enable delegates to read and edit documents compatible with Microsoft Office file formats.

12. In the course of 2010, the Office of Information and Communications Technology, in collaboration with the Department of Public Information and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, enhanced and fully implemented the Google Search engine for the Official Document System (ODS). A new interface has been deployed to permit advanced full-text and metadata searches of all ODS documents in the six official languages. This initiative is a step in the right direction for turning the Secretariat into an e-organization. Information will increasingly be made available electronically, rather than through printed documents, which not only conserves paper, ink and energy, but also facilitates the dissemination, storage and retrieval of information. The search function of the new ODS is a veritable revolution brought about through a joint effort by multiple organizational units of the Secretariat.

13. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Office of Information and Communications Technology advocate converting printed documentation to digital format, which makes it easier and faster for staff and delegates to disseminate, store and retrieve information. In 2010, the Department launched the e-Subscription portal http://undocs.org to meet the need of Member States to learn immediately about the release of any document on ODS that is relevant to their national interests or to any cause that they have supported in the

United Nations. The e-Subscription solution extends the capabilities of ODS by automatically e-mailing a link to any newly released document that meets the user's selection criteria. In addition, the Department has developed simplified online access by making it possible to add a United Nations official document symbol to the URL http://undocs.org. For example, typing "undocs.org/A/62/793" in a Web browser will allow a user to bypass the additional ODS-related search steps, permitting immediate access to the specific General Assembly document. Similarly, in order to find a particular Security Council resolution, a user need only type "undocs.org/S/RES/1969(2011)".

V. Training, support and awareness

14. The Working Group continues its focus on promoting awareness of its activities and is gradually placing the results of its efforts online. Telephone directories and the guide to Internet services for delegations have been updated and incorporated into the Member States portal, deleGATE.

15. The Working Group and the Secretariat continue to explore the idea of establishing a forum in which the diplomatic community and the Secretariat can exchange information and views concerning the use of ICT in the Secretariat, including strategies and initiatives, as an extension of the Working Group's focus on awareness, and to serve as an additional bridge between Member States and the Secretariat in this area.

16. In April 2010, the DiploFoundation E-diplomacy Initiative was launched at the United Nations in New York. The meeting on e-diplomacy was facilitated by the permanent missions of Malta and Switzerland. Mr. Jovan Kurbalija, Director of DiploFoundation, provided a framework for discussion through his presentation on "e-diplomats at work". The senior managers of the Office of Information and Communications Technology, the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs briefed United Nations diplomats on Secretariat activities and ICT projects concerning the relevance of e-diplomacy. In addition, Mr. Choi Soon-hong, Assistant Secretary-General and Chief Information Technology Officer, participated in the International Conference on E-diplomacy, held in Malta in June 2010.

17. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continues to enhance its programmes for training in the management and use of United Nations documentation, as well as in the use of United Nations and external online databases and resources. Delegations have taken advantage of personalized coaching sessions and customized group programmes within the scope of the personal knowledge management initiative, which provides assistance regarding the use of information-handling tools and resources.

18. In collaboration with various partners, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) offers a wide range of online courses, some in French and Spanish, including multilateral diplomacy; training for peacekeepers in the predeployment stage; public finance and trade; and environmental law. Now using the Internet as a training medium, the Multilateral Diplomacy Programme brings participants and trainers together in a unique virtual learning environment. All courses build on the Institute's wealth of experience in designing and implementing training workshops on diplomacy and multilateral affairs at the

country and regional levels. In New York, the Institute offers courses on basic ICT skills to delegates through its Continued Information Technology Education Programme.

19. The Secretariat provides technical support through the Office of Information and Communications Technology Service Desk when problems arise with any of the provided services or infrastructure. In 2010, the Service Desk handled more than 700 ICT-related requests of permanent missions, including requests for, inter alia, CandiWeb, e-mail accounts, website support and network connectivity.

20. The Office of Information and Communications Technology continues to refurbish surplus personal computers and peripheral devices and provides them to permanent missions, under the overall guidance of the Working Group. Statistics on computing equipment donated to permanent missions in 2010 are contained in the annex to the present report.

Annex

Computer equipment given to permanent missions in 2010

Equipment type	*Number*
Central processing units	802
Monitors	582
Printers	302
Other devices	456
Total	**2 142**